

Listening to the Voice of the Customer

Why Market Research is Important for All Businesses

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Market Research Top 10 List for all Companies

1. First and foremost, it's the "Voice of the Customer" that truly counts.
2. Do not enter into market research if you're not willing to listen and accept what the respondents have to say. The essence of research is to assist you in making wiser decisions across your business. See item #1.
3. Market research is accessible for any size of company and budget.
4. Think about market research as an investment in your company, not as an expense that you may or may not be able to afford.
5. Research should always be considered in everything you do; it's the type of research utilized that should be determined based on needs and budget.
6. Every research project should have an overall project goal and specific objectives. Research methodology should be determined based on these goals and objectives. You must always ask, What are the questions we want this research project to answer?
7. Online research can be utilized successfully, for the right projects.
8. Research instrument design is critical to ensure you're getting at the underlying emotions of respondents.
 - o What is the benefit of the benefit?
9. Let the research results -- the data -- tell a story. In analysis, patterns of insights and key storylines may jump right out at you or you may have to tease them out. But the story is there to be told.
10. Research can play a major role in staying accountable to your company's goals.

Determining the Right Research Method

Three types of research:

1. Qualitative Research
2. Quantitative Research
3. Secondary or Syndicated Research

A research study conducted by a research company with its results available to multiple client companies. Some studies are complementary, others for sale.

Qualitative Research

Research that yields an in-depth understanding on a topic. Simply put, it investigates the **why** and **how** of decision making, as compared to **what**, **where**, and **when** of quantitative research. Qualitative research typically focuses on a small sampling of the population, thus results cannot be projectable to the larger population.

Dyad or One-on-One Interview (1-on-1) – an in-depth interview conducted by an interviewer with one respondent at a time. Typically for sensitive and difficult topics.

Triad – an in-depth interview involving three people: two respondents and one interviewer. Topics more limited in nature, or for example, husband and wife.

Focus Group

An interview where a small group of eligible participants are invited to participate in a discussion about a particular topic.

- Typical focus groups: 8 – 10 participants
- Mini focus groups: 4 - 5 participants
- Teleconference focus groups: 8 – 10 participants
- Computer focus groups: 8 – 10 participants using computers to communicate rather than open communications; responses on a screen in the room

Online Research

- Online focus groups: 8 – 10 participants in different geographic locations
- Online bulletin boards: communications with specified participants over a longer period of time/days

Mystery Shopping

To assess and improve the standards of service provided to an organization's customers by simulating a real customer experience on-site. Respondents are not aware that they are the subject of research.

Ethnography / Observation Studies

Ethnography is a qualitative method of studying and learning about a person or group of people in their own environment. Usually used to watch respondents as they go about tasks related to the marketer's products.

Usability Testing

Usability Testing is the assessment of a product or service's effectiveness and efficiency as viewed by a specified group of users. Usability Testing is most frequently employed with Web site testing, but is also used for other applications such as assembly instructions, packaging use, product preparation and other consumer-based actions.

Dial Testing

Dial testing is a means of gathering in-depth, immediate results using handheld wireless technology in order to understand a continuous, second by second account of how a group is feeling about a particular stimulus and to monitor emotional responses. Typically used to test messaging, advertising, speeches, etc.

Brainstorming and Idea-Generation

Qualitative approach in order to generate new ideas, not to discuss customer or prospect issues and motivations.

Quantitative Research

When making key decisions, results from quantitative studies are indicative of what is true for the population as a whole. This research employs larger samples and takes less of the respondent's time. Surveys are standardized to ensure reliability, generalizability, and validity.

How well the sample represents the population is gauged by two important statistics: margin of error and confidence level.

Most researchers use the 95% confidence level. For example, a survey may have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent at a 95 percent level of confidence. In other words, Company X surveys customers and finds that 50 percent of the respondents say its customer service is "very good." This information means that if the survey were conducted 100 times, the percentage who say service is "very good" will range between 47 and 53 percent most (95 percent) of the time.

Telephone Survey

Respondents are interviewed via the telephone. The telephone interview is normally conducted from a central telephone facility.

Mail Survey

Respondents may, or may not, be recruited ahead of time to participate.

Online Survey

Respondents may, or may not, be recruited ahead of time to participate. Opportunity to show visuals for reactions with minimal expense.

Resources: SurveyMonkey.com, Zoomerang.com, ConstantContact.com

Online Panel

A pre-selected group of homogeneous people used more than once over a period of time to collect information.

Mail Panel

A collection of respondents who have been recruited to participate in a series of surveys conducted through the mail.

Intercept Interview

A term used to describe a study conducted in person with respondents who are approached or intercepted in high traffic locations such as grocery stores or shopping malls.

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Research

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) research allows respondents to take surveys by interacting with a computer using a telephone touch pad. Respondents call a toll-free phone number, enter a code and then take a survey.

